hi i'm med welcome to my siCK tWisTeD MiNd

jk this is a zine organizing guide! please note that it's not a definitive guide to anything and i'm not the smartest person in the world… but this is how i do things and hopefully it can be of help?

zine organizing for fun and profit (but maybe not that much fun, actually)

intro

hi, i'm **med/@daikonhime**! i have some experiencing organizing zines (persona tarot, twewy zine, minato only, otayuri zine, etc.) and i thought i'd try to make something helpful. let me know if it's helpful! (or if it's not. whichever.)

i've kind of arranged things in chronological order as to when they happen, but it's probably best to plan for a zine with everything involved in mind. that's another way of saying: please read everything first before you dive in, or you might die.

Ps halfway through this autocorrect started forcing me to capitalize only the first word of every new line for whatever reason so… sorry if it's jarring. Rest assured, i still don't know what a shift key is.

f.a.q.

adding a quick f.a.q. because i've been getting some questions lately! please read these before asking me any questions.

can you help me decide on specs for my zine?
unfortunately, no. that's your choice!

can you help me find a printer for my zine?
also no -- unfortunately, my free time is limited enough as is!

how do i establish a fanbase to buy my zine?
the only real advice i can give here is recruit artists with an established fanbase, and draw a lot yourself.

i have a question not on your faq or in your guide!
if it's a *general* question (eg: i have ____ question about this part of the guide that i think could use a little more clarification), please feel free to ask me and i'll try to add it to this guide! if it's a *personal* question (eg: i have a project and need you to give me ___, ___, and ___ specific advice!), please do not ask me, as i do not have the time to help everyone with their individual projects.

in general, if it's a question that you feel is specific enough to have to dm, it's probably too specific. as much as i'd love to, i'm not in a place leisure time-wise to be able to help people with their specific projects for free. sorry! on the upside, the entire point of this guide is to help you find your own way, so hopefully that helps.

now, onwards…!!

step 1. decide on specs

well… to make a zine, you kinda have to **pick a topic**. you can do something more broad, like a general pokemon zine, or something more narrow, like a pokemon + desserts themed zine. personally, i think it's more interesting to have a more specific topic, but honestly that's completely up to you. what you *do* want to do is make sure that nobody's done the same thing before, because that would probably make for an awkward situation.

also, you'll want to **pick a size** for your zine. most zines that i've purchased are usually a5/b5 (roughly half of a sheet of printer paper) size, but you can go bigger or smaller as your heart desires. oh, and make sure to either pick **number of pages** that you want to put in the zine or **number of artists**.

step 2. assemble artists

now you have the theme of your zine! what you need next is people to fill that zine. there's a couple of different ways to lure artists to your zine:

- **invite**: as in, literally, slide into artist dms (or whatever method of contact is the most respectful) and ask them if they want to take part in your zine
- **open application**: usually, this involves putting together a google form asking for contact information and a portfolio

there are other methods, but that's usually how i do zines, and it seems to work pretty alright! you can alternatively do a mix of invite and open application, those work pretty well.

some notes on open applications:

- Some people might look for specific criterion, but usually, i look based mainly on the examples of full illustrations they give.
- Side note: if they've done zines in the past, go ahead and look through their entries and see if that's what you want in your zine, since that's probably a good indicator

- You'll want to make sure that you **advertise** the application as much as you can, so it reaches a wide array of artists. Twitter, tumblr, etc are all good methods of advertising.

general info that you should give to artists (usually listed at the top of a google form, or in an info doc):

- zine **theme** and **specs** (mainly, size): all those things you put together in step 1!
- a **timeline** for when everything will happen - it doesn't have to be exact, and it can be tentative, but it's very nice for artists to get to know when things will happen
- plans for **compensation**: is your zine for-profit? is it to charity? if it's for-profit, how will profits be divided? will artists who draw bonuses get more money?
    - Also: make sure to state if artists will get just a physical copy, a copy + bonuses, etc. clarify that part.
        - Side note: you can allow the artists to buy extra copies at cost to sell at cons, or for personal use. It's a really nice way of sliding some extra income at the artists!
- thanks for their time!

info that you should ask from artists (aka what they write in the google form):

- **contact information** (usually email)
    - side note: i've used twitter group dms to organize in the past and i think emails are a looooot easier. js.
- **portfolio link**: usually i make sure to ask for links to full illustrations, because it's a little harder to gauge what an artist's full illustration from the zine will look like based on, say, a sketch blog.
    - if they're a writer, ask for links to completed fics of the length that you want for the zine.
- **number of pages** that they're willing to draw. usually, the option you give is 1 or 2 pages, and in general, you'll accept artists regardless of the number of pages they're willing to draw, this is mainly just to help you plan the number of pages in the zine.
- **bonuses** that they're willing to draw. usually, i give a list of options to choose from, and it's usually charms, stands, stickers, and postcards. vary that as you like.

After you get that information from your artists and compile a final artist list from the applications, you should send out confirmation and information to the accepted artists, usually in the form of an email with a link to an info doc with all of the things mentioned above. (Side note: it's probably best to make **a separate email account** for your project. I would go as far as to very highly recommend it.) make sure to also send out rejection emails, as well, and be as polite as you can about it, because they did you the courtesy of giving you their time either way. Also, i usually don't do this, but if you want you can ask some artists to be **pinch hitters** in case people drop out.

step 2.5. assemble *art*

This step mainly involves sitting back and waiting and sending reminder emails as artists grace your inbox with their lovely submissions! A few things you can do during the process:

- **Set mini-deadlines**, by which people should do ___ thing: common milestones are state a general idea by x date and send a concept sketch by x date.
- **Send reminder emails**: like many other breeds of human being, artists can be forgetful. Send reminder emails a few days before whatever deadlines there may be!

Oh, and make sure to build a few days into your timeline for the stragglers that will inevitably turn in their submissions late. for people who keep pushing back the deadline, have a set very firm deadline in mind and drop them if they can't reach it.

generally, i give about 1-2 months from the initial confirmation to the art deadline.

step 3. $ales

Note: i'm writing all of this assuming that you're going to sell **physical copies** of your zine… if you're only selling digitally, i think you can just put it on gumroad and be done with it, but if you're doing physical bundles, you also get to deal with the fun stuff below.

Some notes on **physical vs digital copies**:

- I personally prefer to only do physical, because i find it's more $$$ and i really just love getting to hold my own physical copies… so my advice on digital copies might not be the best
- Basically, the pros and cons are like this:
    - Digital: easier, you just have to upload a pdf instead of printing, shipping, etc.
    - Physical: more sales and also, you get to hold a physical copy in your hot little hands. You have to deal with a metric ton of logistics now, though.

Congrats on making it this far with your zine, wow! Well, now it's Capitalism Time, how exciting~ this is personally this most interesting part for me but i know a lot of people think that it's a chore - each to their own, etc. here's some stuff you need for the process:

- An **online store**. ~~I like tictail, not really for interface reasons but more because a lot of zines use tictail, so i think zine buyers are fairly used to it. Also, the interface isn't bad, better than storenvy imo.~~ **update 12/2/17**: i have switched to **bigcartel** and it has **shipstation integration** and my life is changed.
    - Oh yeah, make sure to mention on the store that this is a preorder and will be shipping during ____ time period.
- Some **bundle tiers**. You know those bonuses you decided on earlier? Well, they come into play here! You could sell just the zine if you wanted, but bundles are fun and more popular. Here's some common bundle tiers and some rough prices - note that these are

suuuper rough estimates and you can really flex these prices and tiers as you need, i just wanted to provide a rough outline as an example.
    - Zine only: base price
    - Zine + sticker sheet + postcard: base price + $10
    - Zine + sticker sheet + postcards + charm: base price + $15
    - Zine + sticker sheet + postcards + charm set: base price + $30
    - Etc.
- A **PayPal account**. You'll probably want to tie this to the zine email.
    - !!**IMPORTANT NOTE ON FINANCES**!! If you're the one whose name the paypal is under, make sure to set aside a chunk of the budget to pay off taxes later, because this will go under your personal earnings and you're going to have to explain it to the IRS at the end of the year. For the love of whatever deity you do or don't believe in, do this, or your personal finances will Suffer. Don't do that to yourself. (If you're not in the US, it'll probably work a bit differently for you, but you probably still have to pay taxes either way)

and then comes the **advertising**, which involves fun things such as:

- bugging all of your artists to post **previews** across their social media and linking back to the store
- making some **official preorder announcement posts** and bumping them over and over (and over… and over…)
- perhaps having a **giveaway** of a free zine for a signal boost
- reveals of the **bonuses** that will come with the zine
    - side note: a lot of people will put up bonuses with the announcement post instead of revealing it separately. that's fine and completely up to you, i just like to do everything as separately as possible for maximum visibility.

the length of your preorder period, and when you start and end it, is entirely up to you, and personally, i just say to set in in accordance with your personal schedule, since you're the one that has to fulfill all of these things (probably). usually the order i do it is preorder announcement post -> artist previews -> bonus announcements -> giveaway but i don't think it really matters all that much as long as the preorder announcement post is the first thing up, and your store link works and is ready to go.

step 4. fulfillment

yay ok it's time to bring on the pain. actually this is legitimately the most painful part of zine organizing. you have to be at least a little bit maso in order to be a zine organizer, after all. (maybe more than a little.)

p.s.: if you find this step intimidating, did you know that i run a **zine fulfillment service**? this isn't up to the public yet but since you're reading this guide, you are considered in the in, congrats! seriously though if you want me and my crew to print and ship all of those pesky zines and

bonuses for you (yes, we even print the zines and bonuses for you, all you gotta do is provide files) for a reasonable cost, feel free to drop me a line at lipglocks@gmail.com or daikonhime@twitter - serious inquiries only, please!!

let's take this one step at a time.

Artist copies

- You'll want to do a closing form after you collect all of the art pieces from the artists -- or, well, that's what i usually do.
- In it, i usually ask for:
    - Name/url that they'd like credited in the zine
    - Paypal email address (so you can send them their $$$)
    - Mailing address
    - How many extra copies they want to buy (if you're offering this option)
    - Any closing comments?

printing

- i'm not going to write a guide on how to get your files print ready because that should be relativelty easy to google, but you should get your files print ready.
- if you have over 100 copies you need printed and you want fantastic quality and versatile printing options, consider using my book printing service at over at getmeds.info, and get a freeeee~ quote!
    - (Yes, i am advertising myself again. I wrote this entire guide, i think i am allowed to do this. Thank you.)
- I print all of my zines through my own service, so i actually don't really have any other recommendations for printers. I'd suggest yelping printers in your area though, because a lot of the time there are some good mom & pop print shops out there that are good quality and could use support! The biggest bonus of local printing is that you don't have to pay shipping, since you can just go pick it up. If you're in the bay area, i really like replica copy over in berkeley, just a block from downtown berkeley bart.

Some notes on printing quality

This is mostly opinion stuff, my personal thoughts on what looks good print-wise, but i'm including it in the hopes that maybe it'll be helpful?

- Matte > Glossy. In general i waaaay prefer matte over glossy but in particular if you're using a lot of solid or subtle colors for the cover, matte will support it much better. Also if your art has a cool texture overlay on it (eg: a cool parchment paper effect) getting gloss rather than matte will make it look a lot cheaper, and i don't think you want to do that to your art. Matte!!! Please!!! Matte covers are so beautiful!!!!
- If you can, get perfect bound. It looks a lot more professional than stapled zines, especially as you get more pages.
- Use spacer pages, and include a title page!! This is something i'm guilty of myself - previously, my zines used to be so that when you open the zine, the first page you see is

just the first art piece. I have recently seen the light, and it looks so good when you open the first page and the other side of the cover page has like a nice pattern or something and then the first inner page has a nice cover page, with the same thing on the back. It makes it feel more like a book, and it feels a lot more professional.
- Use thick paper, but don't go too thick. You might think thicker = better quality, which i think is generally true for, say, prints, but if the pages are too thick it's hard to flip through the book. That said, go thicker than copy paper. You have to treat the work your artists bestowed upon you better than that, y'know?
- Don't be afraid to spend a little more for better printing. Sure, it might lower your profits a bit, but the work that the artists devoted their time to drawing for your zine deserves to be treated well, and the customer who is supporting you deserves to be treated well, too.

Anyways, after you've ordered all your zines and bonuses and they've all arrived in your mom's living room because you don't have enough room in your tiny college apartment, it's time for the most maso part of them all: **shipping**.

Disclaimer: all of these are based on my experiences shipping from the us. If you live outside of the us, this'll probably be different, but also: if you live outside of the us, consider asking an organizer to ship from within the us, or, again, getting me to do it for you, because that's a lot of customs forms to fill out and a lot higher shipping cost, because most zine buyers are also america-based.

Actually, before that, you should do some **pre-shipping** stuff to get yourself ready for the shipping part. Here's a handy dandy **shipping checklist**:

- **Bubble mailers**!!! These are so great, you just slide the zine into it and seal it off to the buyer, you literally can't run the project without them, bless these troopers.
    - I usually buy these from u-line because the u-line warehouse is near my mom's house and their mailer quality is so sturdy and good, but I've recently learned that their corporate is highly homophobic… i hear royalmailers and papermart are good alternatives, though! I've used royalmailers before and it's pretty decent, although it's a bit of a bummer because the u-line mailers are better quality (though also more expensive).
- **Label sticker paper**. Because trust me, you're going to want to print your own labels. You can buy these on amazon, they're pretty cheap and you can just use your mom's janky inkjet printer to print labels onto these things and peel the sticky part off and slap them on the bubble mailer, no tape required!! I usually buy the ones with two stickers per sheet, one on each half.
    - The trick to using these is to import the shipping labels into adobe acrobat, cropping the pages in half, and then using the details of the print function in acrobat to fit two labels onto one sheet of paper, and voila!
    - Alternatively, if you have a bit of budget, you can buy an actual label printer - i use the dymo 4xl and it's the love of my life, it prints labels like a dream…

- **Postage software**. This one isn't super necessary but i don't really like paypal's shipping system, so i opt to pay $10-15 a month to use endicia, which makes printing labels really easy. I hear stamps.com is good too, but i have a mac and endicia has a dedicated mac program which is pretty easy to use, so i use that instead.
    - **update 12/2**: i hiiighly recommend using **shipstation**, which can integrate with etsy, storenvy, and bigcartel. it's somewhat pricier than endicia but does have a free trial (let's be real, you will only need it for about a month anyways) and can automatically send your tracking numbers for you.

Now, it's time to **ship**!! Here's some extra notes that should help when you're printing labels:

- Use usps, unless you have a lot of money to spend. Your tax dollars are at work paying usps, might as well use it.
- Zine only orders and zine + postcard + sticker only orders can be sent via usps media mail which is pretty cheap, but slower. Other bundles need to be sent via first class mail, though. First class mail will usually come out to about $3-5 a label.
- If you're shipping internationally and your package fits within the guidelines (¼ inch thickness iirc), consider shipping the orders as large envelopes, which don't have tracking but are significantly cheaper. Those will cost you about $8-12 per label.
    - Note: usps updates its prices surprisingly often, so make sure you check for yourself instead of taking my word for it and pricing accordingly.

The packaging process is pretty straightforward: just slide everything into mailers, seal the mailers, stick the label on. It is fairly labor-intensive, though, so i highly suggest calling in favors and getting yourself some extra hands. Budget a bit of the zine to take your hardworking pals out to a nice dinner, because even if they're you're friends, labor shouldn't be free.

Some notes on the **post office**:

- You can schedule a pickup via the usps.com site and they'll actually come to your house for free and pick up everything for you! I feel a bit bad for the postal carriers and tend to take everything to the post office myself, though.
- Post offices vary from place to place significantly, but some post offices will haev places around back where you can drop off bulk packages. Post offices also usually don't pick up the phone so it's hard to learn these things unless you go in person and ask, though.
    - If you're in riverside (california), the post office on chicago has this area around back where you can drop off packages in bulk and it's really, really wonderful.
- Make sure to be polite in your interactions with the usps! These people are paid by the hour, and you've made more work for them.

After everything is done:

- Time to calculate out **artist profits**, and send them to all of your artists, and pay yourself on the back for a job completely finished and done!
- Or is it? Because in accordance with murphy's law, packages will be lost, mail will be stolen, and your inbox will be inundated with people with concerns.

- You'll want to make sure you have a **slush fund** set aside -- around $100-300, depending on the size of your project, sitting in paypal after paying all the artists so you can give refunds and resend packages if need be. Because need will be.

Anyways that's it

Congrats, now you have a zine all done sitting on your bookshelf! Good job! And thanks for reading through this mess!

Side note:

I've typed this thing up over a number of different days at airports and in cars and in offices, so there's a big chance that i've left something out. Please lmk if i did, i'll keep adding to this thing!